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HINDUISM
DOCTRINE AND WAY OF LIFE

C. Rajagopalachari

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GENERAL EDITORS

K. M. MUNSHI

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BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY

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संस्कृत–प्राकृत–भाषा–विभागः
लखनऊ–विश्वविद्यालयः
लखनऊ



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आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

Rigveda, I-89-i

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1970

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CHAUPATTY, BOMBAY

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the re-integration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him free-

dom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literature of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata,* summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita,* by H.V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-

five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women, and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita,* which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, Queen Victoria Road,
New Delhi:
3rd October 1951

K. M. MUNSHI

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FOREWORD

WHETHER the claim made in the introductory chapter that Vedanta can create a conscience for social obligations is accepted or not, this book will have served its purpose if it gives to those who read it a clear idea of the philosophy of the Hindus and the way of life flowing from it. Hinduism has been the subject of study by quite a number of earnest men from foreign lands. Some, repelled by features of the social structure still in existence among Hindus, have condemned Hindu philosophy itself as worthless. Others have found great and rare things in it, but in trying to give expression to what they admire, they confuse and mystify their readers and leave them sceptical. This is only what may be expected, for while difficulties of language and idiom can be overcome by patient scholarship, the complex product of the gradual synthesis of philosophy and social evolution, that is to say, of the eternal with the ephemeral, which has taken place through millennia and which reflects vicissitudes of a chequered history, is not easy for a foreigner to understand or explain. It is hoped that this book will be found to present in a brief and fairly understandable form the elements of Hindu faith and ethics, a knowledge of which will enable one to grasp the ethos of India.

Half the population of the world lives in Asia and professes allegiance to religious and moral ideas that undoubtedly originated in India. Sir Henry Maine has stated that,

barring the blind forces of nature, there was nothing that lived and moved in the world which was not Hellenic in origin. This may be true, but it must be remembered that Hellenic thought owes a good deal to India. Philosophic speculation had well advanced in India before the time of Socrates. The conceptions of Indian seers travelled to Greece and could not have failed to make their impression on Hellenic thought. Even from the point of view of the mere scholar, it would be helpful to have a clear knowledge of the basic elements of Hindu religion and philosophy.

India has her importance in the world, and knowledge of the basic elements of India's culture would enable people to understand her better. The Government of India is secular in the sense that the State does not support one religion or another but is firmly pledged to impartiality towards people of all faiths. But this does not mean that the people of India have given up the spiritual and moral doctrines in which they have been brought up, which form the basis of all their culture and which qualify and shape all future additions to that culture. This book deals with the spiritual and ethical doctrines that have given to India its way of life.

Names of gods do not make religion any more than the names of men and women make up their personality. Names are originally given and used without any idea of comparison or contrast with other names. They are handed

down by tradition. Custom gathers fragrances and associations around them that are not perceived by any but those who have for generations been brought up in the use of those names. Each name by which the Most High is known is hallowed by the ecstatic religious experience of seekers, and gathers round itself the light and fragrance and the healing strength born of the rapturous adoration of generations that have sought and found Him. Whether it be God, Jehovah, Bhagwan, Ishwar, Allah, Hari, Siva or Narayana, it is the same Being that in vague manner is recalled by every devotee when he utters the name which he has been brought up to associate with the mystery of the universe and the urge of worship. To an outsider or unbeliever the most exhaustive collection of such names can bring no help to understanding.

The writer must make it clear at the very outset that he does not profess to prove anything but seeks to present the body of faith called Vedanta to those who are not familiar with it. It is his belief that while agnosticism or scepticism may do no harm and on the contrary may do much good to the minds of an enlightened few that find satisfaction in it, in the mass, scepticism inevitably and steadily leads to positive denial. A divorce between action and moral responsibility follows. This is not good either for the present or for the future generations. It is the writer's conviction that Vedanta is a faith as suitable for modern times as it was for ancient India, and more especially so, as the world

is now fully and irreplaceably permeated by the discipline and knowledge that have come to stay through science and are bound to grow as time advances.

Mahatma Gandhi has made it clear that he disapproved of seeking to convert people from one religion to another. Conversion would mean asking them to give up the use of names, symbols and rituals in which they were brought up from childhood and inducing them to adopt a new set of names, symbols and rituals. At the same time, people who follow one religion should understand the other religions professed by their fellow citizens. Most certainly, at least the religion of the vast bulk of our people which necessarily influences the life of the nation, should be understood by those who have been following other faiths. Integration does not mean the giving up of any creed or customs or the adoption of those of others but consists in all round sympathetic understanding.

If we desire the sincere cooperation of people following other religions than Hinduism, we must make them also understand Hinduism. Ultimately all religions, all the ways adopted by men and women to offer obeisance and adoration to the Most High are the same.

आकाशात् पतितं तोयं यथा गच्छति सागरम् ।
सर्वदेवनमस्कारः केशवं प्रति गच्छति ॥

As all the waters falling as rain from the sky ultimately reach the ocean, so does reverent obeisance paid to whatever God ultimately reach Kesava.

There are differences in forms and rituals. A knowledge of Hinduism will make Hindus better Hindus, and Christians better Christians, Muslims better Muslims, and all of us better citizens in a consolidated nation.

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

HINDUISM is a modern word. Vedanta is the best among the numerous names given to the religious faith of the Hindus. He who professes and practises Vedanta is a Vedantin. This name has not so far been solely appropriated by any single Hindu denomination.

If regulated cooperative economy must replace individual competition, it calls for some spiritual and cultural basis, and the ethic and culture rooted in Vedanta can undoubtedly fulfil this purpose. Every one now realizes that the scheme of life which held the field till recently and which gave what was called prosperity in the nineteenth century is now out of date. The prosperity resulting from the economy of private competition necessarily carried with it inequality of distribution. Indeed, the prosperity was based on this very inequality. Some people either in the same country or elsewhere had to live in varying degrees of squalor in order to build up and support that prosperity. But a change has now come about and unhappiness in any sector of society or in any part of the world is considered as an intolerable disgrace and it is the conscious aim of all classes and all people to reach much higher standards of general, physical and moral comfort than now prevail. Inequality is no longer considered either necessary or even tolerable. The old scheme of life based on private competition and *laissez faire* is definitely condemned as anarchic. It has come

to be looked upon as a revised edition of the law of the jungle. It is now widely recognized that what was hitherto thought to be the private enclosures of individual life must in the interest of society as a whole be trespassed upon and regulated by the community. The common weal has the dominant claim in every national State. It is also realized that, as far as possible, regulation should be deemed an international obligation, since the nations of the world and their needs have become so interrelated that it is now an established rule that national boundaries should no longer mark the limits of economic control.

What is felt, however, by large sections is that while regulation is necessary, the economy resulting from it should be so designed as not to stifle individual liberty and individual initiative and kill the sense of joy which issues out of the exercise of that liberty and initiative. Some have no hope of this reconciliation and deny its possibility. But others stoutly maintain that it is quite possible and that there is an economy that can combine the necessary overall regulation with the basic freedom of the individual. There is so much joy in individual initiative that it is worthwhile to make an attempt to find a solution which will preserve it, if not wholly, at least in great part, while imposing regulation in the interest of the community. It is never good to give up the battle for freedom as lost. Whichever view may ultimately turn out to be true, one thing is certain, that the pain of a regulated economy is due to the fact that regulation comes from outside, imposed by an external authority. Not only does this compulsion by external autho-

rity create pain, but it prejudicially affects the working efficiency of regulation itself. Judged, therefore, from every point of view, an ordered economy as distinguished from *laissez faire* calls for the general acceptance of a code of values and a culture that can operate as a law from within and supplement whatever external regulation it may be necessary or feasible to impose. Such a code of spiritual values and such a culture will help in the preservation of a sense of individual liberty and initiative in the midst of complicated State regulations, to keep which sense alive is the aim of those who seek to reconcile the new order with old liberty. Even those who look upon this liberty as an outmoded illusion and plump unconditionally for regulation must agree that a law operating from within is more efficient than one externally imposed, and also less liable to evasion. The baser elements of society try to exploit regulation and make of it an opportunity for illegal gain either of power or wealth. One of the most difficult practical problems in regulated economy is how to meet this evil. A well accepted ethic and culture is the only solution.

The question, then, is whether there is any ground for hoping that we can devise and make people accept a culture or an ethic that can effectively operate in this manner. Can we devise and promote a religious faith that will assist large-scale regulation of the life of the individual for the benefit of the community? It may be admitted at once that it is not an easy task, even if it be assumed as possible of achievement, now to found a new religion to serve a particular secular purpose. But Vedanta, for which I claim the virtue of

appropriateness to the new economy, is not a new religion. It figures in the most ancient calendar of faiths, and it is the living faith which ostensibly guides the lives of three hundred millions of men and women. The common folk living in the greater part of Asia profess religions and moral ideas very closely related in origin to the religion and the moral ideas of India. Although the West has for long accepted Christianity, the faiths that inspired the literature and philosophies of Greece and Rome were faiths that in a large measure absorbed and assimilated Vedantic currents from India. An exposition of the basic principles of Vedanta may, in addition to giving adequate information to those who are interested in the religions of the world, secure some attention from important persons concerned in re-ordering the world in secular matters.

Political ideas that are crumbling under the weight of events are clung to by their adherents with the fanatical desperation of last-ditchers. Disaster threatens. Thinking men have to cast about for some sounder foundations for civilization and for the principles of international conduct if catastrophic misfortune is not to befall the human race. If indeed one of the most ancient of the world's heritages can serve as such a foundation, its principles deserve to be set out in as clear a language as possible for examination and acceptance by earnest men.

CHAPTER II

DISHARMONIES

TRUTH IS ONE and indivisible and the seat of harmony or unity of thought is the human mind on which all external impulses impinge. It is impossible for the mind to accept a truth for some purposes and reject it for others. We cannot be doing wisely in entertaining contrary disciplines of mind. The discipline of physical science has come to stay. Indeed, it is by far the most dominant discipline of modern times. Material objects and forces offer themselves for the closest examination and the greatest variety of experiment. It is not therefore surprising that the advance of knowledge in that field is more rapid and substantial than in morals or philosophy. The forms of thought and reasoning imposed in the discipline of physical science must be accepted and taken as models in shaping other disciplines. It is no good running counter to them. Acceptance of the scientific method is not a defeat for religion, but is acceptance of the sovereignty of truth, which is only an aspect of religion. It is a correct view of religion that it can never be out of harmony with science. But it is too well known how often the propositions of religions are contrary to the accepted axioms of the scientific world.

Even greater is the divergence between religious and moral doctrines on the one hand and the principles of expediency governing political activities on the other. The contradictions are ignored or treated as inevitable and no

attempt is made to reconcile them with one another. It has become another accepted axiom that contradictions between religion and practical affairs must be deemed unavoidable! This is not a form of reconciliation, but chronic disharmony, and it must result in injury to the minds of men and consequently to social well-being. Hypocrisy cannot become harmless by being widespread and taken for granted. It acts like a consuming internal fever which is worse than an obvious and acute distemper.

Human energy is wastefully consumed in the disharmonies involved in the prevailing contradictions in science, religion, national politics and the conduct of international affairs. We have no doubt got on for a good length of time on this wasteful plan of life. But, is it good or wise to continue thus? The problems we have to face are increasing in difficulty and the disadvantages of error increase in accelerated ratio with the size and number of the difficulties we have to overcome. What did not materially affect the position when the problems were simple assumes tremendous proportions when they have grown bigger and become more complex.

The laws of nature that we have come to know, the philosophy we believe in, the statecraft that we practise should all be made to accord and harmonize with one another if we hope successfully to face the problems that confront us in the present most complicated world. Have we a real belief in truth? This is the vital question. If we have that belief then we must summon the needed courage

and act. Previous generations had simpler problems, but it must be admitted that they grappled with them more courageously and with a greater spirit of adventure than we seem inclined to show in tackling our more difficult problems. This weakness is unfortunate, whatever the causes. We should not, however, despair but, drawing inspiration from our forebears, summon all the spirit we can command to restore basic harmony of thought and to make all necessary modifications in our fundamental beliefs and axioms for that purpose.

When our minds dwell on scientific research and studies, we implicitly accept certain truths. It is a mistake to believe that by a mental fiat these accepted axioms can be dismissed and forgotten when we deal with God and the things of religion. Neither truth nor the human mind is so docile as to submit to such unnatural repression. But does it not look as if we have accomplished this successfully during all these years of steady scientific progress? The explanation is that faith divorced from truth has become hypocrisy, and the achievement of the impossible was only a delusion of the mind. Two contrary faiths could not possibly remain as faiths and secure the allegiance of the mind. The one or the other must have deteriorated and changed its real substance while masquerading as faith.

As for the contradictions between religion and that class of worldly activities of intelligent men called politics, the divergence is even greater than that between science and religion. We practise the art of holding contrary faiths

when professing and expounding religion and morality as against the principles followed when dealing with affairs of State. We accept certain firm axioms at one time and expect them to lie dormant in a corner the next moment when we deal with statecraft.

Indeed, it is generally considered folly for anyone to base the practice of politics on the principles of religion. Even so good and pious a man as Sir Walter Scott wrote in his personal journal, "The adaptation of religious motives to earthly policy is apt among the infinite delusions of the human heart—to be a snare." He meant definitely that religion and politics had better remain in different pigeonholes and that it would be folly to attempt to reconcile the basic axioms of religion and those of politics. This is accepted almost as o truism in daily life but is not the less harmful for such general acceptance. It has been, throughout the ages, considered reasonable and wise to resort to various forms of self-deception to carry in one mind the load of these two isolated disciplines of worldly wisdom and religion. Worse still, it is also considered wise to practise fraud on the minds of our children for the purpose of handing this scheme of isolation down to the next generation. Each one of us has the responsibility of bringing up a certain number of children and shaping their tender minds. Parents and schoolmasters both practise deliberate fraud where they owe their most sacred duty and abuse the trusting plasticity of the young mind to fulfil this 'sacred' object of perpetuating disharmony of thought and handing it intact to the next generation! The unpleasant task is

often sought to be transferred by father to mother or *vice versa*, and by both to the schoolmaster. The work is done in the untidy way in which all unpleasant tasks are bound to be done, but it is done so far as the mischief is concerned. The child is taught absolutely to accept certain principles as right and taught also at the same time to discard those principles in action wherever worthwhile worldly results are to be obtained.

A simultaneous acceptance of contradictory ideas is not possible except in the form of an illusion. Even if it be accomplished in a *bona fide* manner, it cannot be a healthy process. We cannot employ untruth as a servant without paying the heavy wage it demands, viz., spiritual death. It is just another aspect of the great truth that was embodied in the significant words that the wages of sin is death. If we continually practise error, we cannot prevent the wells of the spirit from going dry.

The injury done by disharmony is to the mind, which is the thinking and feeling machine,—the very engine-room in the power-house of human energy. When the engine is damaged, what else can we expect but serious injury to the cause of human progress? Even if we look upon civilization as a business concern, its most precious capital asset is the sum-total of the minds of its men and women. The depreciation to which this asset is subjected by reason of the chronic contradiction of principles is ruinous. The hope of mankind must be restored by stopping this rot.

In the olden days the contradiction between science and religion was not so great as it is at present. The very backwardness of science was a factor that reduced the difference. As a result, in those days fervent adherence to religion and philosophy not only did not cause serious disharmony but on the contrary spiritualized research and led men to great achievement. This was possible because they did not try to believe in contrary things. There are numerous instances in the pages of ancient history as well as in the early history of modern times of great pioneers in science being devout men of God who regarded research as the service divinely ordained for them. But science has now grown and has an immensely wider circle of followers than ever before. As a result, the maladjustment is at present much more serious and the mischief tremendous. The contradiction between religion and politics is greater than the divergence between religion and science.

It is indeed a miracle that earnest Christians preserve both their faith and their psychological health under the conditions of current national and international activities. The State permits, aids and abets the wholesale infringement of what is daily read and formally taught as the word of Christ. Yet, almost all the citizens of the State profess religion and believe themselves to be Christians. They duly celebrate Christian rites and festivals. The reign of relentless private competition, the right to make maximum private profit at the expense of others and the exploitation of every advantage got by accident or acquired by enter-

prise, so that the differences between man and man may grow in geometric progression, are all plain denials of Christ. For the execution of deep-laid plans based on the so-called fundamental right to private competition, gigantic corporations equal in respectability to the Church and far richer, grander and more awe-inspiring than the Church's most impressive manifestations are established under the authority and protection of democratic States. Yet, almost every citizen of those States is a Christian or belongs to some other faith equally opposed to inequality and exploitation. The anti-spiritual significance of the hypocrisy generated by such contradictions is tremendous. Civilization must crumble corroded by this contradiction if nothing is done to avert the catastrophe.

It may be argued that this is an exaggeration, that there are many individuals who are faithful to professions and who continually protest against the misuse of wealth and power. A great deal of dissent is no doubt honestly and bravely expressed in every country against the neglect of religious principles. Even war in just causes is opposed and the volume of pacifist literature may be considered as standing proof of the validity of this plea. But this dissent of individuals is allowed to be expressed only because it does not materially interfere with the existing order. It even serves in its own way as an ally of the dominant hypocrisy, for by providing a vent and an escape for guilty conscience, it relieves the pressure and allows the crime to continue.

CHAPTER III

ANCIENT YET MODERN

THE QUESTION may be asked, all this being accepted, what then? Is not the contradiction inevitable? It is true that religion or philosophy contrary to modern science is bound to become sham and hypocrisy, but is there any possibility of removing the maladjustment or averting the mischief? Can we offer to the world a new religion which is not contrary to science? While it may be true and may be accepted that to secure a firm basis for progress all disharmony between science and religion and between religion and statecraft must be removed, and an integrated and well-adjusted body of thought and feeling must be established, is there any hope, it may be asked, of finding a solution in that direction? Are we not leading to the position that religion must be given up altogether? Is it not obvious that the contradiction pointed out can only be removed by the total abandonment of religion? Is it possible, at this stage of human history, to build a religious fabric around scientific truth as it has evolved and is still evolving?

Vedanta is the answer. It is not necessary to build a new religion. In India, we *have* a religion, and a philosophy attached to it, as old as civilization itself which is remarkably consistent with science as well as politics.

The claim may to outsiders seem strange, especially to those whose knowledge of Hinduism has been derived from the information supplied by the Christian missionaries of an older generation. As we are not, however, living in the times of the proselytizing Christian missions whose one function was to show that Hinduism was good for nothing, it may be hoped that the claim made here will receive a fair examination at the hands of sincere thinkers. In any event, readers in India would stand to benefit by a reassessment of their own heritage in the light of modern conditions and requirements.

Put in precise words the claim is that a code of ethics and a system of values were evolved by Hindu philosophers out of the religious philosophy known as Vedanta, which is not only consistent with science, but is admirably suited to be a spiritual basis for the juster and more stable social organization that good people all over the world desire and are working for. The attempt everywhere has been to bring about economic and social reorganization on the strength only of State authority. It imposes a great strain on that authority, and is subject to inevitable flaws in execution. It has also this defect of all repressive State actions—that it is irksome to the citizen and creates a mental state unfavourable to cooperation, whereas the furnishing of a code of spiritual values through religious faith and practice would reduce the strain, minimize the flaws in execution and produce a happier integration of thought and action which by itself would be a priceless gain and a source of strength.

It goes without saying that spiritual values proposed as the basis of a sounder social organization must not be an improvisation or an invention of expediency designed to further material interest by cloaking it with sanctity. A spurious scheme of so-called spiritual values to serve a sordid purpose would be a delusion if self-imposed, an imposture if offered for acceptance. Honesty is the best policy; but it is not as policy that honest conduct was made part or continues to be part of every religion. Similarly, Vedanta is bound to help a regulated economy but it is not for that reason that it was conceived or should be accepted as a faith. It claims to be accepted on its intrinsic appeal and worth. If accepted, it will serve also the other purpose. Truth, it may be repeated, is one and indivisible. Politics, religion and science cannot rest on mutually contrary axioms nor can the mere expediency of any of them enable it to pass for truth, unless it is true in the sense at least of its presenting no vulnerable point for attack by reason of inconsistency with established truths.

The Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita are two most important source-books of Vedanta. It is a remarkable achievement of intellectual imagination—it would not be incorrect to call it inspiration—that the rule of law in science was anticipated in the ancient Hindu scriptures. The God of Vedanta is not an anthropomorphic creation with human capriciousness and desire for power—a conception against which the veriest tyro in modern science can launch a successful attack. Divine sovereignty is explained in the Bhagavad Gita in language which anticipates and meets the diffi-

culties that modern science raises against religious cosmology. According to the Bhagavad Gita, the sovereignty of God is exercised in and through the unchangeable law of cause and effect, that is, through what we call the laws of nature.

> All this world is pervaded by Me in form unmanifest; all beings abide in Me, but I stand apart from them. And yet beings are not rooted in Me. Behold the scheme of My sovereignty, Myself the origin and the support of beings, yet standing apart from them! Using nature which is Mine own, I create again and again all this multitude of beings, keeping them dependent on nature. In the scheme of My sovereignty, nature brings forth the moving and the unmoving, and in consequence of this the world evolves.

This is what Bhagawaan says to Arjuna in the ninth chapter of the Gita.

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना ।
मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः ॥

All this world is pervaded by Me in form unmanifest; all beings abide in Me, but I stand apart from them.
IX-4

न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ।
भूतभृन्न च भूतस्थो ममात्मा भूतभावनः ॥

And yet beings are not rooted in Me. Behold the scheme of My sovereignty, Myself the orign and the support of beings, yet standing apart from them!
IX-5

प्रकृतिं स्वामवष्टभ्य विसृजामि पुनः पुनः ।
भूतग्राममिमं कृत्स्नमवशं प्रकृतेर्वशात् ।।

Using nature, which is Mine own, I create again and again all this multitude of beings, keeping them dependent on nature. IX-8

मयाध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते सचराचरम् ।
हेतुनानेन कौन्तेय जगद्विपरिवर्तते ।।

In the scheme of My sovereignty nature brings forth everything, moving and unmoving, and keeps the world going. IX-10

A study of the Upanishads will show that Vedanta postulates that the universe is the result of a gradual unfolding of the creative power inherent in the primordial substance. In fact, it may be said that the philosophy of Hinduism anticipated the basic theories of biology and physics. The very approach to things in the Upanishads, the insistence on adherence to truth and on tireless investigation, is remarkably in the nature of an anticipation of the methods of science.

सत्येन लभ्यस्तपसा ह्येष आत्मा सम्यग्ज्ञानेन ब्रह्मचर्येण नित्यम् ।
अन्तःशरीरे ज्योतिर्मयो हि शुभ्रो यं पश्यन्ति यतयः क्षीणदोषाः ।।

Truth, penance, true understanding and purity of life are essential requisites for the revelation of the spirit within. When thus revealed, He shines spotless and resplendent within oneself. The seekers who have freed themselves from sin are vouchsafed the vision.
Mundakopanishad—III-i-5

सत्यमेव जयते नानृतं सत्येन पन्था विततो देवयानः ।
येनाक्रमन्त्यृषयो ह्याप्तकामा यत्र तत्सत्यस्य परमं निधानम् ।।

> Victory is ever with truth. Untruth cannot win. The path to the Divine is through truth. The sages with desires quenched walk on that road to reach the Ultimate Being.
>
> Mundakopanishad—III-i-6

Francis Bacon who gave to modern science the method of experimentation and inductive reasoning wrote (1612) in one of his essays:

> "I had rather believe all the fables (collected in books) than that this universal frame is without a Mind ...... They that deny a God destroy a man's nobility. For certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature. It destroys ...... the incentive to the raising of human nature."

Just as Vedanta appears to have anticipated science and prepared the ground for meeting the contradictions that were to appear between science and religion, so also the code of conduct and the spiritual values that were developed by Hindu seers on the basis of Vedantic philosophy seem to have fully anticipated the socio-economic problems that civilization has had subsequently to face. The profit-motive and the civic right of private competition were definitely asked to stand back in favour of a rule that everyone should work for social welfare, as clearly set out in the Bhagavad Gita. We are now told by social and economic reformers that the

State should see to it that men and women work without aiming only at personal gain but with an eye also to the welfare of the community. And this is just what the Bhagavad Gita laid down. The way of life taught in this living spring of Hindu ethics is based expressly on the equal dignity and sacredness of every form of labour that falls to one's lot. All work, it reiterates with solemn emphasis, should be done honestly and disinterestedly for *lokasangraha* —welfare of the community—and not for the satisfaction of personal desires. Indeed, the Gita lays down in a unique manner the whole socialist doctrine by characterizing work as a religious offering in the truest sense. The performance of one's allotted task is specifically described in the Gita as an authorized and accepted form of worship:

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।
स्वकर्मनिरतः सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु ।।
यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ।।
श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात् स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ।।
सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत् ।
सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृताः ।।
असक्तबुद्धिः सर्वत्र जितात्मा विगतस्पृहः ।
नैष्कर्म्यसिद्धिं परमां संन्यासेनाधिगच्छति ।।

If a man is devoted to his particular duties and performs them, he wins beatitude. When a man performs his proper duty, he worships Him from Whom the world has issued and by Whom all that we see is pervaded, and thereby he attains beatitude. It is better for one to do even inperfectly the duties that

fall to one's lot, than to do those of others perfectly. If a man does the work that comes to him by birth, no blemish will attach to it, whatever kind of work it may be. One should not abandon one's natural duty, even if evils attach thereto; every human activity involves some evil as fire carries smoke. He whose mind is in every way detached, whose self is conquered, who has freed himself from selfish longings, attains by dint of that detachment the attributes attached to worklessness.

—Gita XVIII 45 to 49

The very definite form in which the doctrine is enunciated that the proper performance of one's allotted task is an act of worship in the most religious sense of the term is worthy of note.

Yet, these very texts have lent themselves in the hands of prejudiced critics to the interpretation that these verses are an apology for the preservation of the privileges of the higher castes! Perversity and prejudice can convert elixir into poison. Every statement in an ancient book should be interpreted in the context of the then prevailing customs.

Everywhere now in the civilized world, men want a wise allotment of work to individuals as well as groups in accordance with the demands of common interest in place of personal choice or caprice. They feel they have had enough of *laissez-faire* and of the 'divine' right of making unlimited private profit. If it is essential that individual efforts should be regulated and controlled in the interest of society,

this vital duty cannot be left entirely to the spy and the policeman employed to keep watch over citizens. We must build up a social conscience and a cultural incentive to co-operate from within and create a spiritual yearning which makes a joy of restraint and strenuous discharge of duty. The terrors and risks and the very guilt and savagery of a violent revolution might by a natural reaction bring into being a fanaticism that serves to back a new economic order that was brought into existence at supreme cost and sacrifice. This fanaticism may function as a kind of spiritual incentive. But the same cannot happen when the revolution is attained by a mere Act of Parliament. The spiritual value of things depends on the price paid for them in suffering and sacrifice. An easily achieved revolution has not the same psychological virtue as one paid for in blood and tears. Where there is no backing of revolutionary fanaticism or its after-effects there must be found something else to operate as motive power. The only thing that can do this effectively is a faith that operates as a law from within and cooperates with the State. In Vedanta, we have a teaching rooted in immemorial tradition and associated with the sacred names and memories of a long line of seers, which can serve as the spiritual and cultural basis for a new and more just economy of life, if not all over the world, at least in India itself.

Whether the claim made by me that Vedanta can create a conscience for social obligations is accepted or not, let us understand the philosophy of the Hindus and the way of life flowing from it.

All culture in India has been rooted in Vedanta. Whatever courage, heroism, self-sacrifice or greatness is to be found in our history or seen in the lives of our people has sprung from Vedanta which is in our blood and tradition. For Vedanta is undoubtedly a living philosophy of life in India, a part of the mental structure of our people. The people of India get it not from a study of books but from tradition. It is in the air, so to say, of India and Asia. The foreigner has to get it from books and he necessarily sees so much subtlety in it that he may well swear that it is impossible that such a doctrine could ever be the actual cultural basis or living spiritual principle of the daily life of any people of modern times. Yet this is the fact in India. The greatness of Gandhiji and the strength of his movement were entirely derived from and rooted in Vedanta. However much foreign civilization and new aspirations might have affected the people of India, this spiritual nutriment has not dried up or decayed or changed. The lives of the rich as well as of the poor, of the leisured classes as of the peasants and labourers, of the illiterate and not only of the learned, are in varying measure sweetened by the pervasive fragrance of this Indian philosophy. Paradoxical as it may seem, even communities born to avocations deemed dishonest and disreputable have evolved a code of honour of their own, and are Vedantins to the extent of sincerely respecting it. This curious moral enclave in sinful lives touches the heart, and makes a great pity of what is doubtless just a matter for sheer reprobation.

The Upanishads are quite large in number, but about twelve may be called the principal Upanishads and they are now available in collected book form with fairly accurate translations. It would be a mistake to expect ancient works to be like the books of our own time. The principal Upanishads were written thousands of years ago—scholars are not certain about the exact time. In India as in the rest of the world, the environment and the lives and habits of men were all very different then from what they are today. We may not forget or overlook this difference in attempting to understand and interpret the Upanishads or for that matter any book of ancient times. To interpret and judge things written more than three thousand years ago in the light of today and bring to bear on them modern doubts, discoveries and controversies would be utterly stupid. We should remember that what is now doubted or disputed was not then a subject of question or controversy. Any literature, sacred or secular, must be juxtaposed with the real life of the place and period before it can be rightly understood. We should throw our minds back thousands of years, and try to recreate by an effort of imagination the world of the Upanishadic period—the way in which men lived and thought, and the way they disciplined themselves—so that we may understand and appreciate what was said by the rishis or seers.

The principal teaching of all the Upanishads is this: Man cannot achieve happiness through mere physical enjoyment obtained through wealth or the goods of the world or even through the pleasures attainable by elevation to the happy

realms above through the performance of the sacrifices prescribed in the Vedas. The potency of these sacrifices was a matter of implicit belief in those times. Yet, the attainment of these worlds of pleasures through Vedic sacrifices is not the object of the Upanishad teaching. In fact, pleasures in super-terrestrial worlds were regarded as hardly higher in real value than sensual enjoyment on earth. The Mundakopanishad, after a glowing description of the welcome accorded in *swarga* to the performer of sacrifices—how he is borne there on the rays of the sun and told in loving terms that he has earned the pleasures he is going to enjoy—goes on to say:

> Perishable and transient are the results achieved by sacrifices. The person of small wisdom who having won them congratulates himself on having eternal bliss is caught up again in decay and death. He only enjoys the fruits of his deeds in a distinguished place in *swarga*, and when they are exhausted he returns either to this world or enters a lower one.

The only happiness worth a wise man's seeking is permanent happiness as distinguished from fleeting pleasures that are exhausted by enjoyment like a credit account in a bank, either here or in the world beyond. Absolute happiness can result only from liberation and it follows therefore that spiritual enlightenment alone, which frees the soul from all illusion, can liberate the soul by breaking the bond of karma, the unending chain of work and results, and unite it again to the Supreme Being, which is *moksha* (liberation).

It is necessary to point out that enlightenment does not mean learning, much or little. Indeed, enlightenment (*jnana*) is not an intellectual state, but a state of spiritual awakening which comes through moral rebuilding. Purity of life and a mind free from selfish desires are essential for enlightenment. Without full moral self-control, no enlightenment is possible.

> नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।
> यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा वृणुते तनूं स्वाम् ॥
> नाविरतो दुश्चरितान्नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ।
> नाशान्तमानसो वापि प्रज्ञानेनैनमाप्नुयात् ॥
>
> Enlightenment does not come from extensive study or by learned discussion or through the intellect. It comes of itself when one's self intensely yearns for realization, but not unless the mind has turned away from evil and has learnt to control itself and to be at peace with the world.
>
> —Kathopanishad I-ii-23, 24

The path of enlightenment therefore runs through stages in which the self gets more and more purified, more and more truly freed from the longings that often seem to disappear but hide themselves only to reappear in other forms. The mantras or verses of the Upanishads may appear in some places to conflict with one another, but these contradictions disappear when it is remembered that the whole is a process of teaching by stages. All education was through oral teaching in those days. The disciple lived in intimate companionship with the teacher and the scripture was little more than an economic guide to the teacher and not a text-book

to be kept in the student's library. To the teacher as well as to the pupil, it was a help to memory, not a comprehensive treatise. The system of education when the Upanishads were composed was a highly evolved process but the medium was not, as now, the reading of books bought at bookshops or taken out of libraries. This made a great difference as to the content of books and what was left for oral guidance.

Separate cults based on the worship of Siva or Vishnu are of no consequence in Vedanta. Whatever may be the significance of the later controversies as to who represents the Supreme Being, the Siva or Vishnu of our mythology, these controversies do not find a place in the Upanishads. Vedanta has indeed no place for such disputes. Vedanta is not mere philosophy. It is both philosophy and religion. Yet there is no controversy in it about forms of worship. Vedanta is the common heritage of the people of India in whatever denomination they may happen to have been brought up. In his treatises, Sankara, the great Vedantin, uses the word Narayana to indicate the Supreme Being. Others in their books give to the Supreme Being the name of Siva. Names and images, whether mental or sculptured, even the sacred and mystic syllable "Om" itself, are but crutches to help the faltering fleet of infirm faith on the way to realization—mere aids to concentration, and protection against doubts and distractions. The Saiva-Siddhanta philosophy wherein Siva is the Supreme Being is not different from the Vedanta taught by Ramanuja who treats Hari as the Supreme Being. The wor-

shipper of Siva or Hari may emphatically say that either the one or the other is the Supreme Spirit and every other God is but His manifestation for the time being and for the particular function, but names do not matter. Indeed, Jehovah, Allah and the God of the New Testament might well be made the central name-piece of the teaching of the Upanishads and the sense of it would remain unaltered. Pious men of all religions should indeed study the Upanishads and the Gita in that very manner, to whatever faith they may belong, only substituting their accustomed name wherever the Supreme Being is referred to. This really means that the Upanishads contain the quintessence of all faiths in which the divine thirst of the soul for the nectar of immortality has found expression. They contain the answer to the yearning appeal

असतो मा सद्गमय ।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर्माऽमृतं गमय ।

From appearance lead me to Reality.
From darkness lead me to Light.
From death lead me to Immortality.
—Brihadaranyakopanishad, I, iii-28

The tradition in Hinduism is that it is not open to any Hindu, whatever be the name and mental image of the Supreme Being he uses for his devotional exercises, to deny the existence of the God that others worship. He can raise the name of his choice to that of the highest but he cannot deny the divinity or the truth of the God of other denomi-

nations. The fervour of his own piety just gives predominance to the name and form he keeps for his own worship and contemplation, and he treats the others as Gods deriving divinity therefrom. This reduces all controversy to a devotional technique of concentration on a particular name and mental form or concrete symbol as representing the Supreme Being. It makes no difference in the content of Vedanta to which all devotees equally subscribe.

> Devotees of other Gods who
> worship them
> With true sincerity really
> worship Me,
> Though not in the regular way

says Sri Kirshna in the *Bhagavad Gita.*

> Just as all water raining from the Skies goes to the ocean,
> worship of all
> Gods goes to Kesava

explained Bhishmacharya in the *Mahabharata.*

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST STEP

It is commonly thought that the main teaching of Vedanta is retirement from the activities of the world. The English literary tradition according to which the 'mild Hindu' lets "the legions thunder past, then plunges in thought again" is mainly due to this illusion, and partly also to wishful thinking. Far from this being true, it is a position refuted in almost every chapter of the Bhagavad Gita with great force. Sanyasa or renunciation has over and over again been explained as the giving up of the selfish desire for the fruits of action, and not the giving up of action itself.

यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते

—Gita XVIII (xi)

"He who renounces the reward resulting from action is called a renouncer." Flight from painful duty is unmanly and ignoble. The teaching of Sri Krishna in the *Gita,* which is the epitome of Upanishadic scripture, is:

> It is thine to do thy duty, the result does not belong to thee.
>
> It becometh not thee to tremble when faced with the duties of thy life.
>
> Look upon pleasure and pain and loss and gain as the same and fight—thereby thou incurrest no sin.

The total effect of the teaching is symbolically summarized by Sanjaya in the *Gita* itself:

> Where there is Krishna, the Lord of Yogis, and where there is also Partha, bow in hand, there is prosperity, victory and all good.

In other words, it is not the cult of the fugitive from battle, but of the strong man armed, who puts his trust in God, and does his duty. Although this distinction was clearly made so long ago and in such an authoritative scripture as the Bhagavad Gita, the confusion still persists and it becomes necessary to reiterate it in the middle of the twentieth century of the Christian era that it is a mistake to identify Vedanta with retirement from life and its activities. Most certainly the lesson of Vedanta is not retirement from social cooperation. It is not the teaching of Vedanta that men should renounce the world. Vedanta does demand renunciation, but that is renunciation of attachment, not of work or duties. It wants men to get rid of the desire for pleasurable fruits, for this leads to error, pain, anger and confusion of mind. It demands detachment of spirit while performing one's task diligently and well. It lays the greatest emphasis on duties in cooperative life and activities in the general interest. Vedanta provides the soul-force to enable us to reduce selfishness, egotism, attachment to pleasure and fear of pain, and helps us to dedicate our lives to the efficient performance of our duties. Out of Vedanta we can develop resolution and fearlessness in service and devotion to truth. The resolution and fearlessness that characterized Gandhiji's long and active life were inspired by Vedanta. This illustration is perhaps more convincing than a whole book of explanations.

A song from Tamil poet Bharati expounds the fearlessness that emerges from Vedanta:

Let the whole world rise against me
And calumny and ridicule pour without relent.
Let me lose my most precious possessions
And be driven to beg for my daily food.
Why, let my friends turn against me
And seek to poison my very food.
Let men attack me arrayed in regiments
And armed with deadly weapons.
Let the heavens break loose and fall on my head.
There is no fear in my heart, for why should I fear?

The root of this fearlessness is in the soul, and is expressed thus in the Isavasya:

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ।।
यस्मिन् सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।
तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ।।

Who sees all beings in his own body and his own soul in all beings—he hates no one. When the knower realizes that all beings are one with himself—what sorrow or what illusion can there be? —Isa—6, 7

Life itself and all that it inherits are transient and unreal and only the good and bad in thought and action stick to the soul in its journey through births and deaths. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad we are told that Janaka realized this and at once became free from all fear.

Vedanta is the inspiration and the lesson practically of all the literature of India in a dozen of its languages. It is not a creed of North or South, but of all India and of all castes and all sects. Names made the sects although there was little or no distinction in faith or philosophy. The source book for all of them is the Upanishads. Vedanta has entered into the current of all Indian literature, prose, poetry or drama, lyric or narrative, and imparts to it in varying degrees a loftiness of outlook and a faith in eternal verities.

Vedantic thought moves round two fundamental conceptions, Brahma and the individual soul. With the advance of enlightenment these two local points converge. The external universe is a transient form and not reality. What the true nature of that reality is we cannot know. The external universe is the form in which it presents itself to our perception. How it may appear to intelligences differently constituted from mankind's we do not know. The Vedanta sets itself the task of reaching a clear comprehension of absolute reality. This attempt, says a modern philosopher, has been made on three occasions in the noble story of human thought—in India in the Upanishads, in Greece by Parmenides and Plato and in modern Europe by Kant and Schopenhauer. Of these attempts, undoubtedly the earliest is that of the rishis of the Upanishads; the other two were probably derived from or inspired by it. Thoughts travel in a subtle way from one part of the world to another. According to Vedanta, the external world gives rise to an almost infinite and bewildering variety of con-

ceptions, some of which seem mutually contradictory. They gather and revolve round two conceptions—Brahma and the soul—and finally with the gradual advance and ultimate perfection of knowledge the clouds of mere seeming are dispersed, and there emerges the one absolute Reality, Brahma. The multitudinous illusions are *maaya*. 'This *maaya* of Mine', says Sri Krishna in the Gita, 'is divine and consists of the basic qualities of beings. It is impossible to extricate oneself from it; but those who come to Me will get over it.'

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।
मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ।।

—*Gita VII* (xiv)

The first step in the teaching of Vedanta is to develop the firm conviction that "I" am entirely distinct from the body through which I function. If real and deep conviction is attained on this point, the other steps are relatively easy thereafter. If, on the contrary, this remains in doubt, further steps are of no use.

Is there any distinct thing that may be called "soul" within this obvious and all-dominating body? Is there something apart from the physical shell or casing, or is it merely a functioning of the body which we wrongly regard as a separate entity? When the body dies, does the soul also die with it? Or being a distinct reality, does it continue to have an existence? This is the basic doubt which

persists in spite of seeming acceptance. The essential in enlightenment or *jnana* is a firm and effective conviction on this matter. The ultimate cause of all the sins and consequently of the ills in the world is the lack of this conviction. Even if the doubt is somehow dispelled at one point of time to one's satisfaction, it returns again and overwhelms one. A man can be said to be enlightened only when he reaches a conviction on this point that is not stirred into doubt again. It is only then that his life becomes one of unswerving devotion to truth, and marked by detachment and utter fearlessness. "There is that in Me which cannot perish; indeed I am that and not this body or the senses working in this body; I cannot be hurt by anything that can happen except by the evil that I think or do; the evil things that come from within Me defile my soul, not anything that comes to Me from outside; the evil that others do may touch My body but it cannot touch the soul". This is the faith that is common ground for all religions, but all the same it is the basic doubt of all men, the removal of which is the essential first step of enlightenment.

If men attain this first step, the battle is practically won. Vedanta emphasizes the importance of this first step. That is why the Upanishads speak not only of the *Paramaatman*, the Supreme Being, but again and again deal in many and various ways with the individual soul. The Gita begins with this by dealing with death and killing in the first discourse. It is not to foster the spirit of cruelty and war that Krishna's famous discourse begins in the manner

that it does. It is to emphasize the first truth before attempting to teach anything else. The first lesson to be learnt before speaking of detachment or anything else is that there is that in us which is immortal, other than the body which we mistake for it. The subsequent lessons would be of little avail or worth if the disciple were still to confuse the body with the person. It is only when it is realized beyond all doubt that the body is different from 'the person that dwells in that body' that Vedantic teaching can proceed. When once that conviction is realized, Vedanta almost automatically unfolds itself in orderly sequence, and but little exposition is necessary to evolve the Vedantin's way of life.

The phrase used in Vedantic literature to express the realization of one's soul as a thing apart from the body and its senses is that one should *see* the soul. The verb 'see' expresses that perfect quality of immediate conviction which is independent of other media and wherein intellect and feeling alike directly and clearly get the vision which is the aim of Vedanta. Intelligence, enquiry and instruction apart, goodness and purity of life are necessary to enable one to 'see' one's soul which is hidden within one's inmost being. The soul can be perceived as a reality, not merely through ratiocination, but only if one is also good.

A wall or a hill or a tree is visible to saint and sinner alike. The truth in a proposition of geometry can be seen by everyone alike whether he be a good man or wicked.

Self-control and equanimity are not required to grasp the truth in these instances. It may be argued that a teacher's guidance and reflexion may be needed to obtain knowledge, but why should a man be good in order to see what exists? Faults of character cannot affect perception of a fact. If the soul exists, it should be possible to ratiocinate and arrive at a clear conviction. Why should character be a condition prerequisite for knowledge of any kind?

The answer to this constitutes by far the most important part of Vedanta. It is the overlooking of this or failure to give adequate significance to it that has caused even some Hindu philosophers to fall into sectarian disputations and differences over the path of knowledge, of devotion, and of works as if they were separate and distinct paths. Neither the earlier Upanishads nor the later Bhagavad Gita furnish authority for the view that *jnana* or knowledge is possible of attainment without purity of mind. Enlightenment can come only if purity of mind and detachment of spirit are attained.

The soul is not a material limb or organ of the body. It is not located in any particular part of the body. It permeates body and mind. Unless the mind is clear, that which permeates it will not assume a distinct form or become known. It is one thing to see external objects, but it is altogether a different process to perceive an entity which permeates and is hidden in our own inner being and whose imperceptibility is due to our passions. Intro-

spection may enable us to analyse our minds and we may ratiocinate about the subject. But to 'see' the soul, we should not only direct our eyes inwards but calm the mind and clear it of passion. Purity of thought and a state of detachment almost amounting to joy arising out of the liberation from external stimuli will remove the turbidity of the medium through which we have to see.

सत्येन लभ्यस्तपसा ह्येष आत्मा सम्यग्ज्ञानेन ब्रह्मचर्येण नित्यम् ।
अन्तःशरीरे ज्योतिर्मयो हि शुभ्रो यं पश्यन्ति यतयः क्षीणदोषाः ।।

Truth, penance, true understanding and purity of life are essential requisites for the revelation of the spirit within. When thus revealed, He shines spotless and resplendent within oneself. The seekers who have freed themselves from sin are vouchsafed the vision.

—Mundakopanishad III-i-5

वेदान्ते परमं गुह्यं पुराकल्पे प्रचोदितम् ।
नाप्रशान्ताय दातव्यं नापुत्रायाशिष्याय वा पुनः ।।

The study of Vedanta without the direct teaching of a father or a guru is not much avail. But more than all, the imparting of spiritual knowledge can avail nothing without the previous purging of character necessary for the knowledge and realization of the highest truth.

—Swetaswataropanishad VI-22

It should be easy to understand that what is in the back and beyond of the mind, so to say, cannot be seen unless the medium is clear and free from passion which distorts vision. It is not intellectual ignorance that blinds

our vision, but desires and attachments. These prevent us from 'seeing'. If this is realized, it will be understood why a virtuous and pure heart is necessary to see the soul within us. It will then also be evident that all the three paths sometimes referred to in the classic commentaries on Vedanta as distinct paths—the way of enlightenment or *jnaana,* the way of faith and worship or *bhakti,* and the way of good works or *karma*—are one and the same.

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।
यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूं स्वाम् ॥
नाविरतो दुश्चरितान्नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ।
नाशान्तमानसो वापि प्रज्ञानेनैनमाप्नुयात् ॥

Realization does not come by much study or by learned discussions. It comes to one whose self yearns for realization. It cannot come by mere knowledge to one whose mind has not turned away from evil and has not learnt to control itself and to be at peace with the world.

—Kathopanishad II-23, 24

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत्स्वयम्भूस्तस्मात्पराङ पश्यति नान्त रात्मन् ।
कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्षदावृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥
पराचः कामाननुयन्ति बालास्ते मृत्योर्यन्ति विततस्य पाशम् ।
अथ धीरा अमृतत्वं विदित्वा ध्रुवमध्रुवेष्विह न प्रार्थयन्ते ॥

The openings of the mind, viz., the sense organs, are directed outwards. That was how the bodily senses were evolved by the spirit within. The senses being directed outwards, men's thoughts ever tend outwards. But some who are blessed with true understanding turn their minds inwards and realize the self within. Those without understanding pursue external pleasures and fall into the widespread net of birth and death. Those of

steady mind do not spend their thought on transient pleasures but seek the joy of liberation.

—Kathopanishad IV-1, 2

Vedanta leaves the matter in no doubt. The mind and the senses must be properly brought under control in order to realize the spiritual substance within us which is distinct from the body. Our reason must be cleared of the delusions born of passions and desires. With unremitting attention, the understanding must be made to control the mind and the senses.

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ।।

It is desire, it is anger, issuing from the element of energy in nature. It is voracious and insatiable in its hunger, the cause of all sin and error, man's chiefest enemy.

—Gita III-37

There is in the Kathopanishad a beautiful simile illustrating the relations which exist between the soul, the body and the senses:

इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुर्विषयांस्तेषु गोचरान् ।
आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तं भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनीषिणः ।।
यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्ययुक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
तस्येन्द्रियाण्यवश्यानि दुष्टाश्वा इव सारथेः ।।
यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति युक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
तस्येन्द्रियाणि वश्यानि सदश्वा इव सारथेः ।।
यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्यमनस्कः सदाऽशुचिः ।।
न स तत्पदमाप्नोति सँसारं चाधिगच्छति ।।

Know the soul to be the rider in the chariot which is the body. The intellect is the charioteer, and the mind the reins. The senses are the horses and the desirable things of the world are the thoroughfare on which they career. If the charioteer is unwise, and does not vigilantly restrain the mind, then the senses bolt uncontrollably like wicked horses. If, on the contrary, he is wise and keeps a firm hand on his mind, then the senses are in perfect control as good horses with a competent charioteer.

—Kathopanishad III-4, 5, 6, 7

The effort and vigilance that secure this control is Yoga, an oft-repeated but much misunderstood word. Yoga is not a physical exercise in postures, giving unusual powers over the body. It is self-control rendered into a habit.

If the state of self-control such as is aimed at in Vedanta is attained, one can 'see' the spirit that is lodged within us. The state of mind reached through self-control and internal peace has to be maintained with vigilance. The aspirant often finds that the state of mind he has reached after difficulty has just melted away. Vedanta warns the aspirants against feeling depressed on this account. The path of Yoga is constant effort and unrelaxed vigilance and perseverance. Any lapse of vigilance results in the disappearance of what was seen. The soul that was seen for a while again disappears in the body and its passions and delusions, and we again mistake the one for the other as we did before.

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥

As often as the wavering and unsteady mind runs away so often ruining it in, it should be brought back under control.

—Gita VI-26

तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ।
अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ ।।

Firm control of the senses is Yoga; even then one should be vigilant for Yoga is acquired and lost.

—Kathopanishad VI-11

CHAPTER V

THE VEDANTIC POSTULATE

THE SIXTH CHAPTER of the Chhandogya Upanishad raises the old question: Was there a First Cause? Shall we, seeing that the search for causes takes us along an interminable chain backwards, give up the idea of causation and believe that the world came out of nothing? This cannot be, says the Chhandogya Rishi. Look round and see all that exists and particularly contemplate on the mind of man, the beauty and content of which you can fully appreciate. Could all this come out of nothing? Out of nothing, nothing can come. Non-being cannot produce being, much less could consciousness come out of nothing. Believe, therefore, says the Rishi, that the causeless beginning was *Sat* i.e., being with consciousness. And that the Original Cause willed to expand and multiply and became light, water, and all the living forms in the world, serving as food for one another and growing and multiplying. It is the *Sat* that is still multiplying and expanding.

The *Sat* is the First Cause in every sense, the *efficient* cause as well as the *material* cause. The Upanishads illustrate this by the analogy of the spider and its web and of the blazing fire and the multitude of sparks which spring from it.

यथोर्णनाभिः सृजते गृह्णते च
यथा पृथिव्यामोषधयः सम्भवन्ति ।

यथा सतः पुरुषात्केशलोमानि
तथाक्षरात्सम्भवतीह विश्वम् ॥

As the spider draws its thread out of itself and is lord over the web it produces, as shrubs and plants grow from the earth, as hair grows on the bodies of living beings, so has all this universe come out of the first imperishable cause.

—Mundakopanishad I-i-7

तदेतत्सत्यं यथा सुदीप्तात्पावकाद्विस्फुलिङ्गाः
सहस्रशः प्रभवन्ते सरूपाः ।
तथाक्षराद्विविधाः सोम्य भावाः
प्रजायन्ते तत्र चैवापियन्ति ॥

This is true; as from the flaming fire issue forth, by thousands, sparks of the same form, so from the immortal proceed diverse *jivas* and they find their way back into it.

प्रकृतिं स्वामवष्टभ्य विसृजामि पुनः पुनः ।
भूतग्राममिमं कृत्स्नमवशं प्रकृतेर्वशात् ॥
मयाध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते सचराचरम् ।
हेतुनानेन कौन्तेय जगद्विपरिवर्तते ॥

Using nature, which is Mine own, I create again and again all this multitude of beings, keeping them wholly dependent on nature. Under My sovereignty, nature brings forth the moving and the unmoving and keeps the world going.

—Gita IX—8, 10

"How can this vast universe with its multitudinous variety be produced in this simple way?" asked Svetaketu whom his father Uddaalaka was instructing about the *Sat* and the evolution of the world.

"Fetch a fruit of that nyagrodha tree," said Uddaalaka.
"Here is one, Sir," said Svetaketu.
"Break it and tell me what you see therein."
"I see some tiny seeds," said Svetaketu.
"Crush one of the tiny seeds," said the father.
"Yes, I have done it, Sir."
"What do you see therein?"
"Nothing," said Svetaketu.

"Yet in that subtle substance which was inside that little seed and which is hardly visible to the eye existed the power that produced all this big-branching nyagrodha tree. Do you wonder at it? Likewise all that exists in this universe was potentially in the *Sat,* dear boy, and thou art That. Believe it."

Mundakopanishad tells us:

"The whole universe is a manifestation and product of that universal, formless, causeless *Sat.* The sun, moon and all the quarters, all knowledge, and the souls of all existing beings are parts and manifestations of that single all-immanent Being. All life and all qualities, functions and activities are evolutions of that single Energy. He is the fire which makes the very sun burn obediently like a faggot in the fire. The rain does not rain, but it is He that rains through and by means of the clouds. Living beings multiply, but it is He indeed that multiplies through them. The mountains and the seas, the rivers, the trees and shrubs and their essences, all issue from that Supreme Spirit who is immanent in everything and dwells in our hearts."

The theory of evolution by natural selection may be considered to hold the field in the science of biology. The whole structure of this remarkably well-attested theory rests on two pillars and seems to do away with design or a conscious cause: first, the spontaneous biogenesis of the first form of organic matter; secondly, the occurrence of mutations by accident and the survival value of the mutations in the struggle for existence. This explanation of the almost infinite varieties of life on earth amounts only to a pushing of the mystery away from the field into an inaccessible corner. The secret remains still unsolved. If we take into account these two postulates on which the theory of evolution by natural selection rests, we see that the solution does not take us away from the causeless *Sat* of Chhandogya. It is the *Sat* that brought about the first biogenesis, and it is the *Sat* that brings into action the yet undiscovered laws which govern what the evolutionists consider to be accidental mutations and causes some of them to survive and become new species. Vedanta has no quarrel with this investigation and the induction therefrom. Neither chemistry nor biology explains anything. Chemical and other 'laws' are only classifications of observed phenomena and nothing more. Neither familiarity nor classification can itself be an explanation. The unexplained factor is the *Sat* of Chhandogya. It is as sublime an act of Omnipotence to create an atom which can create a world and a law which makes it to do so, as to create the fully evolved world by a fiat. Darwin himself has said this in beautiful words in *The Origin of Species*,

The law of cause and effect, which we have derived from our observations of the material world, must be taken to have no application when we look for the Ultimate First Cause of the Universe. At that point we must cease to ask for a cause and surrender to the inscrutability of the Ultimate.

The non-believer may argue that if he is asked to accept Iswara as ever existent and no questions should be asked about a prior cause for that First Cause, he may as well rest content with universal matter and the physical forces that govern that matter as ever existent and that we need not posit Iswara behind the universe. Here it is relevant as well as interesting to point out that the very first name among the thousand names given to Iswara by Bhishmacharya is *Viswam,* the universe. The universe is Iswara in visible form. The question standing over is whether there is a Mind behind it or not. The believer finding a mind behind the conglomeration of matter making up *Homo sapiens* presumes there is a Mind behind the universe. And that is Iswara. This is the vital difference between the believer and the non-believer.

It seems Emperor Marcus Aurelius came to this same conclusion of a universal mind in his *Meditations.* The universal Mind is however not just an expanded human mind. It is a different thing altogether. The human mind may help us vaguely to glimpse the inscrutable nature of the Universal Mind, not more than that. Out of this postulate of the Supreme Mind issue moral values, *dharma* and duty.

CHAPTER VI

MAYA

THOSE WHO HAVE ever heard Vedanta have also heard about *maaya*—the famous Hindu doctrine of illusion. It would be well at once to correct the misconception that this doctrine does away with responsibility because the world is, according to the doctrine of *maaya,* unreal. In truth, however, the doctrine does not lay down that the world is not real. All the teachers who taught the doctrine of *maaya* taught it as part of Vedanta, and Vedanta includes, it should be remembered, the doctrine of *karma.* This latter doctrine holds that we cannot escape the effect of our actions. It is, therefore, impossible for the Vedantin to hold that life is not real. There is no doubt or ambiguity about the doctrine of *karma* which lays down the moral law of cause and effect. No interpretation of any other doctrine of Vedanta inconsistent with the law of *karma* could be correct, as the latter is an integral part of Vedanta.

Vedanta is a philosophy of evolution. The universe, living and non-living, is a manifestation of Brahman. The destiny of all things is change—never for an instant does anything in nature stand still—and the individual soul is no exception. The philosophy of life for the individual soul is to march from good to better by conscious effort from day to day and birth to birth. This necessarily postulates free will, without which there can be no moral responsibility.

A multitude of texts can be quoted insisting on man's mastery over his own future.

The seeker is exhorted "to grasp the mighty bow of the Upanishads, make of his own soul the arrow sharpened by worship, and shoot himself into the Brahman so that the arrow becomes one with the target." In fact, no religion is possible without three postulates—the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and freedom of the will; and these are insisted on repeatedly in Vedanta which conveys also the assurance of success to the sincere seeker. Questioned by Arjuna about the fate of the seeker who fails—"whether losing both worlds he is not lost like a rag of a cloud in the infinite sky"—Sri Krishna assures him that the seeker after good never comes to grief, but goes on improving in efficiency from birth to birth till finally he reaches his goal.

In fact, the Vedanta doctrine, though continuous, can for purposes of clear understanding be regarded in two aspects. The first is that of the evolution of the soul when it moves in *maaya* till it reaches the stage of eligibility for *jnaana* which alone results in emancipation. The second aspect is the nature of emancipation itself. About the first aspect, all schools of interpretation—*Dwaita, Adwaita* and *Visishtaadwaita*—agree. God and the individual soul are kept sharply distinct with an infinite gap between them. Life with its multitude of trials, its joys and sorrows, its triumphs and defeats, in fact all that makes of this world a valley of tears and laughter, is but a link in an almost endless chain of births and deaths. This is *samsaara*. Here

are duties which can be fulfilled with courage and faithfulness or hirked and avoided in cowardly fahion. It is by doing these duties honestly that a man can qualify himself for a higher destiny. In fact, the ordinary rule of life of old was for a man faithfully to pass through the various stages of human life, as a student, as a householder, as a hermit in the forest before he could become a *sanyaasi*. The Upanishad and the Gita are quite emphatic about th imperativeness of doing duty. As a soul progresses either in the same life or in subsequent lives, it perceives that duty is rooted in *maaya* ond that the only way of escaping the enveloping power of cause and effect is to do one's duty for its own sake and without looking for results. Sri Krishna says in the Gita: "Just as the ignorant man acts with hope of reward, the wise man acts for the good of the world without any personal motive whatever." When this state is reached, "when free from all desires which had root in his heart—the mortal even here becomes immortal and reaches Brahman."

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ।।

—Kathopanishad VI-14

In the second aspect of Vedanta, that is the nature of emancipation and what happens to emancipated souls, there are differences between the schools. One school posits the individual soul's perfect absorption into Brahman—or to be exact, realization that *it* is Brahman; it had been Brahman all along but did not know it. Another school holds

it joins *Iswara* without losing its own individuality, while a third lays down that it remains eternally distinct from Brahman and from every other individual soul, and enjoys eternal beatitude in the highest heaven to the full measure of its own capacity.

All the great teachers who taught the doctrine of *maaya* lived their lives on the basis that this world is a reality. Leaving aside the weak and the hypocritical who teach one thing and practise another, if we reflect on the actual lives of the great and good Vedantins who lived in the light of the truth that they saw, it will be evident that they took this world and this life and the law of *karma* to be hard realities. If still they taught the doctrine of *maaya*, that everything is an illusion created by the Lord, what can that teaching mean? It can only mean that the apparent with its false values is different from the real. The Supreme Being is the indwelling spirit, the continuing efficient cause that makes all life live. What we consider different and opposed to one another are different manifestations of the same Universal Being. As the soul is to the body, so is the Lord the Soul of all souls. When, for instance, one says 'I went', 'I came' or 'I did,' though outwardly it is the movement of the body it is really the act of the person that dwells within and brings about all the activities of the body. It would be a mistake to believe that the body is the agent. In the same, though in a less obvious way, the Supreme Being is the soul of our souls. Every movement of the individual soul is an activity of the Lord. All souls are so to say His bodies. The Lord is a reality and so too are the souls that

are His bodies. Just as, though the body is a reality, it is the spirit within that gives to the body its life, so going one step further, that which gives life and reality to the individual souls and makes them what they are is the Supreme Being. The *Paramaatman,* the overall Soul, permeates and supports all souls; but that does not mean that the latter are unreal. The universe as a whole and every individual living and non-living object, all together as well as severally, serve as bodies for the all-pervading Universal Being. This is how Ramanujacharya explains the immanence of the Universal Spirit. To give a concrete analogy which may elucidate the thesis, it is the air in the football that jumps and functions in all manner of ways when the ball is knocked about in the field. Yet we forget the air, and we look on the ball as the thing we play with, not the air. What is all-pervasive and invisible is lost in the obvious tangible hard reality, the ball.

Maaya, as understood by long tradition, is not that everything is unreal and that we are free to act as we please. It is not a negation of responsibility. No school of Vedanta denies the validity of the doctrine of Karma. The doctrine of Karma firmly holds, and with it individual responsibility stands unshaken. Life is real and life is subject to the eternal and unchangeable law of Karma. This and not unreality is the core of the Vedantic view of life. The error against which the doctrine of *maaya* is directed in Vedanta is the false values that men put on things. If we realized the truth regarding the immanence of the Supreme Spirit in all

lives and all things, we would put on men, things and events truer and juster values.

The structure of individual life, if we may so call it, according to Vedanta is this: Each body has lodged in it a soul which fills it with life and changes an unintelligent mass of lifeless material into a living being. Again, each soul is inspired by the Supreme Soul, which gives the individual soul its being and its quality as a soul. Just as the soul gives to the body the capacity to function as a living being, so does the Supreme Being give to the soul its capacity to function as an individual soul.

According to the Hindu faith, the same soul occupies various tenements in various births. When it is lodged in a particular body, it has no memory of its past or knowledge of its own true nature. The soul identifies itself completely for the time being with each body which it successively bears. In like manner, all souls are, at one and the same time, the body of the Supreme Soul, but they do not realize it and carry on as if separate from one another. To take a very mundane analogy, we have seen several departments deriving existence and authority from the same Government above and functioning through the single and entire power of that Government, but opposing, wrangling with and sometimes even over-reaching one another! In a somewhat similar manner every soul is inspired by the *Paramaatman*—the Overall Soul—and functions as a separate entity. Though the in-dwelling *aatman* is one and the same, each

soul lives a life of separate individuality without a sense of identity with others. Herein is the illusion referred to as *maaya,* to overcome which is the aim of the Vedantin.

It is easy enough to accept the doctrine of oneness and believe that with that acceptance by the intellect, enlightenment has come. But the feelings, the desires and the fear and the pain, these do not obey such easily reached superficial enlightenment. Enlightenment is an overcoming of the *maaya* and is a state akin to waking as against dreaming. The way to it is *yoga.* Self-control, faith, discipline, ordered life, and vigilance go to make up *yoga* which brings about real enlightenment. In the learned and the illiterate, in the valiant soldier and the coward, in the strong and the weak, in the mighty and the lowly, in all the multitudes of living beings, it is the Supreme Spirit that, abiding in every one of them, makes them what they are.

Our desires and distractions cause a wall to be raised between our understanding and the indwelling Spirit. The *aatman* becomes altogether inaccessible to reason. The indwelling spirit is hidden from our perception by our pleasures and pains. The spirit itself suffers no taint though lying unseen in the midst of a heap of impurities. If the mind is concentrated, the senses are controlled and the heart is drawn away from external objects, the turbidity of the medium is cleared and then we begin to see the soul as something real and distinct from the body within which it is lodged. If we maintain the purity of the inner being, we shall see, besides, the Divine Spirit that dwells within

that soul. When we begin to realize that within all it is the Supreme Soul that lives and acts, then the pleasures and pains that we feel come under control and gradually lose their intensity and ultimately vanish.

The sunlight that shines and spreads equally in all directions has no shape. But shadows have shapes. The rays of light that make everything else visible are themselves completely invisible. Until the rays impinge on an obstruction, they are not themselves seen. It is the obstruction in the path of light that becomes the shadow; but the shadow has shape, not the light. If there is no obstruction, the light spreads and remains invisible. The individual souls are like shadows caused by the infinite light of the Supreme Being. When the obstruction is removed, the shadow disappears in the light. Karma causes what corresponds to the shadow, i.e., births and lives. The Supreme Being is the light that gives shape and reality and a distinct existence to the individual soul. The shadow that is caused by the light of the sun is by no means an unreality. The shadow is as true as the light although it is the light that makes the changing and diverse shadows. This is, let it be remembered, but an attempt to explain by an analogy and not a demonstration of the postulate that must rest only on faith.

Vedanta aims at *moksha*. *Moksha* is not arrival in another world or place or garden or hall of music. It is a state of freedom from the bondage of *maaya*. The individual soul realizes its own full nature and then Deliverance

has taken place. When the mind is enlightened by the realization that the soul and the in-dwelling Supreme Soul are one, the shadow merges in the light. This is *moksha*. The Samskrit word 'moksha' means liberation and not a happy place or garden of pleasure. *Moksha* is release from all feeling of distinction and the recognition that everything around us like one's own self is the dwelling place of the Supreme Being.

That *moksha* is not a place, palace, garden of pleasure or a separate world of joy, but a state of being, is brought out in the following song of the great Tamil Vedantin, Nammaalvaar, predecessor of Ramaanuja in the line of southern teachers:

When having travelled on the road of Truth,
With the senses well withdrawn and mind purified,
Rapt in meditation of the boundless One,
All pleasure and pain slowly melt away,
And attachments cease to bind. Then and there
Is Heaven, my friend,
And the joy that is Heaven.
Enlightened and free from attachments,
If a soul rests serene and unconcerned,
Then and there is Heaven.
In ignorance fools keep on asking,
Like travellers on a road,
Where is Heaven? How shall we get there?
What sort of place is it? And lose themselves
In endless confusion.

In trying to explain the mental relation of body, soul and Supreme Spirit, different methods of exposition are em-

ployed by the teachers of Vedanta. The *Paramaatman*, the third in the above series, offers itself to a variety of expositions which sometimes are mistaken for differences of creed. Just as the soul gives to the body its quality as a living body, it is the Supreme Being that endows the individual soul with its quality as a divine spark. The soul upholds the life in the body; the Supreme Soul upholds the divine nature of the soul. Just as in this mortal life, body and soul in happy combination become one visible and living person, so also the individual souls when they attain *moksha* combine in a happy merger, shedding all imperfection, ignorance and distraction. Purity of life and self-control qualify the individual soul for this merger which is bliss.

The individual soul is only the shadow of the Supreme Universal Soul. Ignorance is the cause of the shadow and of the impression that the shadow is different from the light that produces it. This feeling of separation is augmented by desire, attachment, anger and hatred. It is a vicious circle of increasing illusion. When the mind awakens from this state of ignorance, the light swallows up the shadow which is lost in the process.

The sun shines on the water. When the surface of the water breaks into ripples, we see numerous little suns on the water. The individual souls are like the reflections of the sun in the water. If there be no water, there are no reflected images. In the same way, the individual souls are the reflections of the Supreme Being on the ocean of *maaya* and they become one with the Supreme on the re-

moval of that *maaya.* To dispel ignorance and to obtain knowledge, we need purity, self-control, devotion and discrimination.

Just as all the five senses merge in the soul and disappear when we sleep at night, so with enlightenment, the soul is united and absorbed in the Supreme Soul.

Now, these and many other forms of elucidation are adopted by various teachers in their expositions of an inherently unaccountable relation. The forms of exposition adopted and the relative emphasis laid on various aspects go sometimes by names which are known as *Dwaita, Adwaita* and *Visishtaadwaita*, and which, as Faith deteriorated, came to be treated by disciples as opposing schools of philosophy. They are, however, fundamentally only differences in forms of exposition and emphasis. They are all aspects of Vedanta as old as the Upanishads themselves, wherein they are to be found without distinguishing names and without being treated as different philosophies. The irremovable residue of unknowability takes varying shapes in accordance with the temperaments of teacher and disciple.

Although the forms of elucidation, methods of exposition and emphasis laid on points may differ, it is noteworthy that the Vedantic life, the way of liberation recommended by every one of the sages and teachers is just the same. All schools of Vedanta—and this clinches the matter—lead to the same ethic. This binds

all Vedantins in one outlook. The law of cause and effect and its extension beyond death to future births are common ground for all Vedantins, and hence follows a common ethic for happiness now and hereafter. The ethic of Vedanta, the way of life that Hindu philosophy lays down, is dealt with in the succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER VII

KARMA

IF ALL SOULS are united jointly and severally with the Supreme Being, why should an ethic be necessary to realize this? The reason is that, as already explained, attaining freedom from error in this matter is not a process of study or a gathering of information, but something like waking from sleep, a change of state. A man has a dream. He is distressed by what he goes through in the dream. How can he escape from that distress? Relief can come only through waking from sleep and realizing that he was dreaming. Similarly, we must wake up from the separation that deludes the soul and liberate ourselves from our sorrow. Therefore do the Upanishads proclaim: 'Arise, Awake! *Jnaana,* the realization that the Supreme Soul is within us, is a waking from sleep. It is not like learning from another who has seen it that some-one is in the next room or village. It is not a mere bit of knowledge obtained by enquiry; it is a change of mind, of feelings and of everything inside one, a change not less but more than the change from sleep to waking, very like to a change from night to day or death to life.

Again, it is easy to wake up from sleep. But it is not by any means easy to wake up from the great dream of worldly life. Our mental disposition must change entirely. First of all, the desire to wake up must surge in the heart,

as indicated in the Kathopanishad *mantras* already quoted. The power of the spirit is moved to fulfil itself by the yearning. It is the Supreme Spirit within that furnishes the energy. The text is couched in language that brings all this out if interpreted by a competent teacher. Without this yearning for realization, nothing can be achieved. The ambition to be a Vedantic scholar will not amount to this and cannot help. The desire to be liberated from the state of separation from God must, like hunger driving the beast to its prey, drive the soul to find its only satisfaction. Secondly, unremitting vigilance must be exercised even after the first vision, like the unceasing control of an athlete balancing himself who, once having secured his balance, cannot relax but must all the time maintain complete command over his muscles and his breathing. The external and internal organs of sense must be under firm and continuous command. Right conduct must be maintained until it becomes relatively a matter of course, and the inner being must be purified and kept in an untarnished condition. Perpetual vigilance over one's mind is necessary to escape slipping back into the world of false values, attachments and desires.

Impelled by ignorance, we seek pleasureable sensations, all arising out of sense-contacts, and proceed to do many things to obtain those pleasures. If we do not reach the pleasures we seek, or if we get them for a time and lose them,

we generate in ourselves anger, hatred and grief. This not only causes pain but intensifies the ignorance with which we started. The egoistic feeling of "I", the possessive feeling of "mine", the acquisitive urge of "for me" and the passions that arise out of these grow with accelerated intensity. We are thus thrown farther and farther away from the reality. Desisting from this course and positively and definitely striving to get nearer and nearer to the truth is the path indicated for liberation. For this, purity and humility are essential. We should cultivate and continually confirm the conviction of mind that the Supreme Soul is within us and all around us, and earnestly bend our minds to contemplation of the oneness of all life.

Though the perfect light may not be attained, the effort should not be relaxed, for even if the truth be but partially realized and the effort maintained, it will do us great good. The very exertion to obtain light tends to purge us of our faults and helps us towards right conduct and enables us to escape from many sinful deeds. The mental effort to realize the universal identity raises us to a higher plane of life. With some great souls, in the steadily increasing pitch of realization, it reaches the form of ecstasy, not a mere temporary abnormality, but a sustained joy arising out of unshakable detachment and wide sweeping identification with all life and all creation. It is this ecstasy that made Brother Lawrence happy wherever he was and whatever he was doing. It is of this ecstasy that the Tamil poet Bharati sang.

The crow and the sparrow are my kin,
The wide seas and hills are my clan,
Whatever I see, wherever my eyes turn,
I see my own flesh and blood,
I see myself in every being around,
Oh what boundless joy!

It is about this ecstasy that Sankara sang:

योगरतो वा भोगरतो वा सङ्गरतो वा सङ्गविहीनः ।
यस्य ब्रह्मणि रमते चित्तं नन्दति नन्दति नन्दत्येव ॥

Whether one is practising Yoga, or enjoying some comforts, whether one is with dear comrades or alone by oneself, if one has learnt to find joy in the contemplation of the Supreme Being, one's happiness knows no interruption.

It is not, however, easy for every one to reach and sustain this state of mind as a source of happiness as was attained by Brother Lawrence among others less known. Whether one's effort bears full fruit or not, the effort should be maintained and assisted by occasional deep meditation so as to train the imperfect mind to set true values on things and happenings.

While this earnest effort is being made to identify oneself with the Universal and to liberate oneself from the ego-sense, the aspirant's way of life should be the way of life laid down in the Bhagavad Gita. From what has been already explained as the postulates of Vedanta, it will be seen that this way of life flows as a natural corollary from Vedanta.

The law of karma, the law of cause and effect in things spiritual, lays down that death does not end the chain. Whatever activities we engage ourselves in, the body is not the agent but that which dwells in the body, which does not die with death but takes a lodging in another tenement. The spirit within continually shapes itself and builds its future accordingly. The new tenement is one that suits the shape the soul has worked itself into.

The body is not the person, but the person's tool. It is a fine tool, a magic tool with which the craftsman, the soul, strangely becomes completely one and inseparable for the time being. The soul, too, must be looked upon as an instrument of Iswara who resides within every soul and uses it as a craftsman uses his tool. For what purpose? This we cannot unravel. The Hindu way of looking at it is that it is Iswara's leela or play. Those who posit a purpose may please themselves with their conceits, but must not impose them on others.

The relationship between soul and body, as well as that between the soul and the universal ever-existent Causeless Spirit, is a mystic relationship in which tool and craftsman are merged in inextricable fashion. The body and the subtle senses within it should be loyal to their master, the soul, and serve as good and just tools. Even so, the individual should be a good and loyal instrument for the Lord who dwells within and should dedicate every act, thought and word to Him.

Acts are done through body, speech and mind. The law of cause and effect, it cannot be too often emphasized, is unalterable in every respect. Every act has its appointed effect, whether the act be thought, word or deed. The effect lies inherent in the cause, as the tree lies potentially encased in the seed. If water is exposed to the sun, it cannot avoid being dried up. The effect automatically follows. It is the same with everything. The cause holds the effect so to say in its womb. If we reflect deeply and objectively, not allowing our reason to be guided by our desires—not wishfully thinking but with detachment—the entire world in all aspects will be found to obey unalterable laws. This is the doctrine of Vedanta described briefly as the law of *karma*.

It is wrong to think of *karma* in terms of what is understood by the word fatalism. Destiny as taught in Vedanta does not involve an unscientific attitude towards natural laws or a break-down of faith in human effort, which is fatalism. Karma is the unalterable law of effect following previous causes. This is what distinguishes Vedanta from its half-brother, fatalism, as it emerged in the West from the pagan philosophies. When a Hindu speaks of the decree of fate, the word he uses for fate is *vidhi,* which means law. He means thereby that one should expect only the fruit of one's action and nothing else. Far from underestimating human effort, Vedanta puts the highest value on it. It points out that it is foolish to do one thing and expect to undo it before it produces its effects because they will not

be to your liking. No act can ever fail to produce its result. Nor can any act produce anything but its true result. It is not possible to do a thing and escape its result. One cannot expect something to happen for which something else appropriate to produce that result should have been done. Given the necessary acts, the natural consequences must follow.

The law of *karma* thus does not do away with free will but constitutes the charter of true freedom. The thoughts entertained, words spoken and deeds done all produce appropriate fruits. The consequence may be dealt with afresh but cannot be escaped. Just as we deem it a charter of freedom that one cannot in law be robbed of the fruits of one's labour, the law of *karma* is the Magna Carta of free will.

In the third chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna asks the question, Why do men sin knowing that sin is bad and not desiring to fall into it? The Divine Teacher answered like an up-to-date rationalist. He did not answer saying it was pre-determined by the *karma* of the man's previous births. But he said that the error in the person's conduct results from the urge of desires and anger and hatred which warp the person's judgment and mislead him. The Divine Teacher added that a person should put forth all his spiritual strength to fight and overcome these corrupting influences at the very start, and gave the assurance that the effort to resist will find success. This is a more rationalistic answer

than even what the philosophers of science inclined towards determinism would give.

When a Vedantin says that everything happens according to *karma* it does not mean that human effort is vain. Industry and character will have their reward and the law of *karma* guarantees this. The word *karma* means work and in no wise refers to any mysterious pre-determination by an outer power. *Karma* means work and *vidhi* means law, and any doctrine denoted by either of these names cannot be equated with mystery or external pre-determination. So it should be definitely understood that *karma* is not fatalism.

When we do not know the causes which have produced an event we call the result destiny or decree of fate or chance. But this loose nomenclature means nothing but the lamenting of results and the confession of failure to use our intelligence to find out the causes which certainly existed and produced the result. A Samskrit word commonly used for luck is *adrishta,* which means literally what was not seen. It does not mean that it is not subject to law; it is simply what was not previously seen.

We know from experience and without the help of any doctrine that every thought or act, good or bad, has at once an effect on oneself, apart from its effect on others or on the outside world. Every motion of the mind deals a stroke as with a goldsmith's hammer on one's character, and whether one wants it or not, alters its shape for better or

worse. We are ceaselessly shaping ourselves as the goldsmith busy with his hammer shapes gold or silver all day long. Every act of ours and every thought creates a tendency and according to its nature adds or takes away from our free will to a certain extent. If I think evil thoughts today, I think them more readily and more persistently tomorrow. Likewise it is with good thoughts. If I control or calm myself today, control becomes more easy and even spontaneous next time, and this goes on progressively.

At death, the Hindu doctrine says, whatever character has been hammered out by the thoughts, deeds and repentances of the life that is closed continues to attach itself as the initial start for the soul in its next journey. As a result of our actions and thoughts and the attachments developed thereby, we come into being in a fresh birth with certain fixed tendencies. The doctrine of past and future lives and continuity of evolution through many lives is an extension of the law of cause and effect as we see it working every day. It is this extended application of the natural law that distinguishes Hinduism from most other religions.

No explanation or theory in regard to the ultimate cause of things can be free from difficulties or made proof against objections from a mere rationalist point of view. On the assumption, however, of an immortal soul as the basis of personality, it can be claimed that no theory can be formulated more in conformity with known laws of nature than the Hindu doctrine of *karma*,

Man, according to the law of *karma,* evolves himself exactly according to his actions, the process being unbroken by death and passing on to the next life. This, the most important doctrine in Hindu religion, is the application in the moral sphere of the law of conservation of energy. Indeed, both may be looked upon as parts of one law, *karma* being the counterpart in the spiritual world of the truth that cause and effect are always equivalent. As death is only disintegration of the body and not of the soul, the law of cause and effect, so far as the soul is concerned, continues to operate beyond death. The death of the body does not operate as a bankruptcy-discharge. The obligations so to say continue and are carried over to the new page in the account.

The smallest pebble or even a grain of sand thrown into water produces a ripple. The disturbance is carried onwards in ever-widening circles on the water. Similarly all our acts and thoughts produce a disturbance of the universal calm. The most transient or secret thought entertained in the mind ruffles the great calm and the disturbance has to be worked off.

Whether a man frees himself from the fruits of his past deeds or adds more links to the chains that bind him depends upon the way he lives. Past deeds or rather their effects hold one in their grip from birth, but the soul has freedom to act and in the exercise of that freedom it has the power to overcome tendencies and to strive for libe-

ration. The process and effort can be extended over many births. We make for ourselves our opportunities, and the process goes on ceaselessly for better or worse and is carried on from birth to birth. The battle is as long as eternity and the tedium is relieved by the lapse of memory with each death. Eternity, so to say, bears its own burden. The burden of infinity is not on us but is borne by itself. We cannot get eternity to shrink in order to suit our impotent finiteness. The infinite number of births that a soul goes through may seem to be an unbearable burden by reason of our limited faculties. It is no more unthinkable and no less natural than the age of our mountains or the lifetime of a star. We are indeed blessed in the total lapse of memory with each death. The law works without putting a strain on our feeble minds.

Victory is certain, O mind!
Away with false fear,
Devotion bears its fruit.
Shoulders we have,
Broad and strong,
And intelligence.
We can gather what we work for.
Unalterable law protects
Our efforts unflagging.
Away then with fear and despondency!

Thus has Subramania Bharati sung in Tamil the creed of freedom that is postulated in Vedanta. Freedom is not taken away but secured by unchangeable law. Law, and not a

capricious monarch, is the best guarantee that honest effort can ask for.

The pious Christian may here feel a doubt. If *karma* is inescapable and the sinful must go through what they have unfortunately earned, then is there no room for grace? Yes, there is! Grace comes through penitence; it is not a mere caprice of the Lord. There is large and definite room in Vedanta for penitence and prayer and therefore for Grace. True penitence being the active triumph of the better over the worse, liberation has automatically taken place. Penitence is as much action as sin and represents the soul's victory over its own immediate past. It is indeed victory felt by the inner spirit contemporaneously during the battle itself. If the doctrine of relief through penitence is not a charter for mere ritual or hypocrisy, it is as much an inherent part of Vedanta as of Christianity or any other faith. Sin is worked out in *karma* through the true sorrow and pain suffered by the penitent sinner. Ritual may help the determination not to sin again but it cannot by itself take the place of true sorrow. Vedanta offers to a sinful world the same way out as the Christian doctrine of repentance does. There could be and there is no difference here. Indeed the Vedantic literature on grace is voluminous and positive.

The Vaishnavite cults specially emphasize the doctrine of repentance and Grace. But it is not peculiar to the Vaishnavite cults. It flows from the basic Vedanta although

no doubt greatly emphasized by the Vaishnavites. "Repent and surrender yourself completely to Bhagwaan," say the teachers of the Ramanuja cult. Indeed a further ramification has served to add to this emphasis on man's dependence on Grace. Like a mother cat carrying its young one, God takes up the sinner that surrenders himself completely to Him, say the Southern Ramanujites. "Beware!" say the Northern Ramanujites, "your own exertion is also necessary in part for the fulfilment of Grace. Like the monkey's young one, you must clutch and hang on to the mother in order to be saved. You cannot get Grace unless you co-operative and repent." ("Southern" and "Northern" here refer to the two denominations of the followers of Ramanuja in the South. "North" here does not refer to North India, but to the School of teachers in the northern area in the South.) The distinction is, however, a distinction without a difference. It comes only to this. One says: "You are such terrible sinners that you have no hope but through Grace!" The other says: "Not ritual or hypocrisy but a sincere heart that has gone through the pain of penitence and purged itself can receive Grace."

CHAPTER VIII

THE VEDANTIC ETHIC

THIS IS a very short chapter. Whether the Supreme Being is denominated as Hari or Siva, popular Hinduism does not differ in respect of the awe, reverence and surrender to the Will of that Supreme Being from the followers of Christianity, Judaism or Islam, or other monotheistic religions. Sophisticated Hinduism also has gravitated from its subtle discussion to this simple monotheistic and what may be called *Dwaita* approach. Sri Sankara himself, the great expounder of *Adwaitic* philosophy, has sung devotional songs of superb beauty demonstrating that metaphysical enquiry apart, the Bhakti approach is what he approves and prescribes for all Hindus.

But there is a distinction which marks Hinduism. It is its reconciliation of monotheism with the polytheistic approach of traditional Hinduism. All the gods and goddesses worshipped by the Hindus are aspects of the Supreme Being governing the Universe and well recognized as such, both by the learned and by the least learned. The philosophy of Hinduism has taught and trained the Hindu devotee to see and worship the Supreme Being in all the idols that are worshipped, with a clarity of understanding and an intensity of vision that would be a surprise to people of other Faiths. The Divine Mind governing the Universe, be it as Mother or Father, has infinite aspects, and the

devotee approaches Him or Her, or both, in any of the many aspects as he may be led to do according to the mood and the psychological need of the hour.

The Supreme Being in Hinduism is not subject to numerization. He is one as well as many. He is not subject to specification of characteristics. Each aspect is a whole. Grace is sought from Hari or Siva or the Universal Mother even as the pious followers of the great Semitic faiths, Judaism, Christianity or Islam, do. The Bhakti form of worship has prevailed all over India now for some centuries past, relegating philosophy to the background. *Adwaita* is held in great esteem but has in practice yielded to the *Dwaita* approach.

The differences between *Adwaita* and *Dwaita* philosophies do not affect the Hindu Ethic, the way of life that flows as a corollary from the conclusions of philosophers being the same on account of the acceptance of the law of *karma* by all Hindu philosophers. Indeed it may be said in passing that the way of life that flows as a corollary from the great Semitic faiths, which are all in Hindu terminology *Dwaitic* in character, is the same as what every Hindu understands to be the teaching of his faith, be it *Dwaita* or *Adwaita*. When coming down to how we should live, all faiths become *Dwaita* faiths. Man is under God's command as subjects are under a sovereign monarch.

The Gita which expands and explains the ethic of

Vedanta emphasizes that the activities of the world must go on and we should so act that thereby the world improves in the coming generations. The Vedanta ethic is not for the advancement of the individual but of the world as a whole, advancement in the best sense of the word. The world is peopled by ourselves re-born and so there is an intimate connection between our own spiritual improvement and the future of the world. We leave conditions behind for posterity, not only in the environment, but according to the doctrine of re-birth we decide the character of the future population by our present thoughts and acts. Like good people who plant trees for their children, we should work to improve humanity by improving ourselves for future births, even though there may be no continuity of memory and identity of personality. Otherwise, the world cannot become progressively better as we all desire it should.

The good man should do the tasks to which he is called and which appertain to his actual place in society. Whatever be the position to which he may aspire, his actual place in society for the time being determines his obligations in the general interest. In all his activities he does things like others outwardly, but inwardly he maintains a spirit of detachment. He does everything like others but without any selfish motive. He maintains equilibrium of mind in success and failure, in pleasure and pain, in joy and sorrow. Purified thus, the good man is qualified for further progress by meditation and prayer.

The way of life that is prescribed in Vedanta is called Yoga in the Gita. It consists in maintaining a detached mind while participating in all affairs that appertain to one's place in society. The great secret is that work should be done in a spirit of duty performed and dedicated to God. Results should not be permitted to agitate the mind. The results do not belong to the doer. They may form the subject-matter of fresh duties, but should not be allowed to become cause for mental excitement.

This unselfish and detached attitude can and should be cultivated even while we are diligently engaged in life's activities. "Do everything with detachment and dedicate it to Me. Think ever of Me. This is *buddhiyoga*. Practise it and I shall enable you to overcome all difficulties." This is one of the most important passages in the Gita put in the mouth of the Divine Teacher. (Gita XVIII—57, 58.) The essence of the Vedantic life consists in the unbroken adherence to this attitude.

The Isavasya Upanishad begins with two mantras which say:

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥
कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतं समाः ।
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥

Everything in the universe abides in the Supreme Being. Cast off the desires that arise in the heart, the thought of possessing what is possessed by another or

> is a source of pleasure to another. True joy comes by such renunciation. Do your duties and go through your span of life. In detachment and dedication lies the way for man to live a full life yet keeping the spirit within uncontaminated by worldly affairs. You cannot achieve it otherwise.
>
> —Isavasyopanishad 1, 2

These two verses of the Upanishad put in brief compass the way of life that is more fully expanded and explained with reiterated emphasis in the Bhagavad Gita. The teaching of the Gita may be summarized here although it involves some repetition of what has been already said. The Vedanta always bears in mind that within him and in every object in the world, living and non-living, dwells the Supreme Soul. He will not give room in his mind to feelings of lust or anger or longing for sensual pleasures. He performs fully, carefully and conscientiously, though without developing attachment, all the duties that devolve upon him as a result of the position he occupies by birth or as a result of events and circumstances. Duties arise because of the place one occupies in society. There is in truth no superiority or inferiority in the various tasks devolving on individuals or groups in any social order, all being equally necessary of performance for the maintenance and welfare of society. They should all be performed in a spirit of cooperation and unselfishness. This spirit ennobles and equalizes all the tasks which devolve on men. Controlling his senses, the Vedantin leads a pure life, regulating his work, food, rest, recreation and sleep. He does

not lose heart in the face of difficulties and whether sorrow or happiness falls to his lot, he maintains his courage and equanimity.

The secret of the good life that the Bhagavad Gita recommends consists in the overcoming of Desire in its grosser sense, *kaama*. This *kaama* is the great enemy of man. It takes various shapes, deceiving him—now it is lust, now it is love of power and possessions, yet again it becomes anger. Whatever be the form it takes, it tends to envelop man's judgment and delude him into error and sin. Aim therefore at overcoming this great enemy at the earliest stage of the battle, warns the Gita. *Kaama* takes possession of the senses and of the Will. From these vantage points, it perverts judgment and ruins man. Guard therefore the senses at the very beginning of the battle, says the Gita, assuring the aspirant that Will can control the senses, provided man exerts it before it is too late. Judgment *can* control and guide the Will if only one makes up one's mind early enough and does not let desire enter the fort.

अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।
अनिच्छन्नपि वार्ष्णेय बलादिव नियोजितः ।
काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्धयेनमिह वैरिणम् ॥
धूमेनाव्रियते वह्निर्यथादर्शो मलेन च ।
यथोल्बेनावृतो गर्भस्तथा तेनेदमावृतम् ॥
आवृतं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा ।
कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च ॥
इन्द्रियाणि मनो बुद्धिरस्याधिष्ठानमुच्यते ।

एतैर्विमोहयत्येष ज्ञानमावृत्य देहिनम् ॥
तस्मात्त्वमिन्द्रियाण्यादौ नियम्य भरतर्षभ ।
पाप्मानं प्रजहि ह्येनं ज्ञानविज्ञाननाशनम् ॥
इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः ।
मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्यो बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः ॥
एवं बुद्धेः परं बुद्ध्वा संस्तभ्यात्मानमात्मना ।
जहि शत्रुं महाबाहो कामरूपं दुरासदम् ॥

Impelled by what does man commit sin, though he does not wish to commit sin, as if driven by some irresistible force ?

Replies the Gitaacharya to Arjuna:

Man's enemy is desire born of the Element of energy in the scheme of nature. Insatiably ravenous and most wicked, it is the cause of all sin. This enemy of man attacks judgment and puts it out of action. As fire is surrounded by smoke, as a mirror is covered over by dust, as the embryo is enclosed in the womb, so is judgment, with which man is endowed, enveloped by desire. It seizes the senses and the Will and finally judgment. It deceives, taking many forms, and disables the soul from attaining *jnaana*. Check the senses, therefore, at the very outset, O prince, and vanquish this evil thing that is the enemy of all knowledge and enlightenment. The rebellious senses are governed ultimately by Will, and though Will can be guided by discrimination, this great enemy overcomes discrimination by its evil strength, and puts it out of action. Realizing this danger, do thou exercise the inherent strength of thy soul and defeat this elusive and terrible enemy and save thyself.

—Gita III, 36-43

Here is a clear affirmation of Free Will and responsibility and ample proof that Vedanta is not fatalism.

Let no one say to himself that this schedule of conduct is not for him who is an ordinary man, but for saints and sages. Even a little effort in this direction, assures the Gita, will yield great fruit.

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ।।

There is no waste in this. It is not like the rule of medicine by which if one fails to follow the prescribed diet in any respect, the medicine not only does no good but does harm. There is no such danger arising out of defeats and imperfections in following the discipline herein taught. Even a very little effort in following this rule will protect one from great evil.

—Gita II-40

The Gita lays down and repeatedly emphasizes an important warning: Do not be tempted by philosophy to inaction.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ।।

Thy business is with action only, never with its fruits; so let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be thou to inaction attached.

—Gita II-47

It is inevitable for everyone to act according to his nature and therefore inaction is futile and leads to consequences worse than what is sought to be avoided.

यदहंकारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे ।
मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ।।

Entrenched in egoism, thou thinkest: "I will not fight"; to no purpose is thy determination; nature will constrain thee.

—Gita XVIII-59

स्वभावजेन कौन्तेय निबद्धः स्वेन कर्मणा ।
कर्तुं नेच्छसि यन्मोहात् करिष्यस्यवशोऽपि तत् ।।

Oh son of Kunti! that which from delusion thou desirest not to do, even that helplessly thou wilt perform impelled by thy nature.

—Gita XVIII-60

Freedom lies in the effort to avoid passion and hatred and giving the right shape to what issues from the urge of one's own nature. Do therefore the work that falls to your share with detachment, and find joy in sacrificing your own pleasure for the advantage of others. Do not try to find peace in inaction and confuse it with *sanyaasa*. Renunciation or *sanyaasa* consists in the detachment with which one acts and not in inaction. When one's nature maintains internally the urge for action, as it must, it is detachment, not abstinence, that is called for. Inaction with the urge alive inside leads only to hypocrisy.

All this that was written in the Gita is remarkably anticipatory of the copious modern literature about repression and suppressed complexes.

Two verses from great Sri Sankara's famous hymn

Bhaja Govindam may here be read. They express the practice of Hinduism prevailing now and for centuries past.

गेयं गीतानामसहस्रं ध्येयं श्रीपतिरूपमजस्रम् ।
सज्जनसङ्गे चित्तं देयं देयं दीनजनाय च वित्तम् ॥

Sing the Gita, and the thousand names of God;
Continuously meditate on Lakshmi's Lord;
Turn the mind to the company of the good;
Give away your wealth to the needy.

गुरुचरणाम्बुजनिर्भरभक्तः संसारादचिराद्भव मुक्तः ।
सेन्द्रियमानसनियमादेवं द्रक्ष्यसि निजहृदयस्थं देवम् ॥

Trust yourself wholly to the lotus feet of the Teacher;
Freed from the shackles of *samsaara,*
With your senses and mind controlled in this manner,
You will see the God residing in your heart.

This is the last verse of the Bhaja Govindam hymns of Sri Sankara.

The question may be asked, how can it produce any enthusiasm to be told that something will be fruitful in a future birth? We shall be born in the next birth without any memories of the past. We do not now remember anything of our past lives nor will the memories of this life follow us in the next birth. Therefore, it may be asked, what does it matter whether we do good or evil. Let us seek the pleasures of the present moment. If I am born again I shall then be a different person remembering nothing of the present. When there is no continuity

of memory there is no bond between him and me. How can one feel an identity without continuity of memory? Why should I labour, renounce or retrench my joy for one who will come to exist who is not me? For, with death the memories of this life end.

Thus may the seeker of pleasure or student of human incentives object to the teaching of Vedanta about right conduct and self-control for the sake of a future birth whereunto the ego-memory is not conveyed.

The answer is that the joy of right conduct is inherent in human nature. There is a hunger in the soul which mere self-seeking and momentary pleasures cannot satisfy. This stands confirmed by the inner feeling of everyone of us, by experience as well as by all recorded history. Members of a family work for the good of the family and of the village. We see ordinary men suffering privations for the sake of others whom they have never even seen. People are not indifferent to the good of their village or town. We see that numerous men sacrifice self-interest and suffer for the good of the State and for the safety of their country. What is important to remember is that in all this they derive a joy apart from and independent of any belief in promises or expectations of rewards for such conduct. We do not know who will enjoy the shade of the trees that we plant on the roadside but we plant them so that men of future generations may enjoy their shade. We take real pleasure in all such work. We should widen this broad-

mindedness to a further degree and think of the good of the whole world and its future happiness. The future of the world is in our hands. We can people it with good men if we choose to act according to this teaching. If we accept the law of cause and effect with its extension to future births, then if we live the Vedantic life, the growth of evil will be stopped. The souls that will inhabit the future world will progressively rise to a higher stage.

We have seen with our own eyes the progressive improvement of livestock and the health of men as a result of care and attention bestowed even in one generation. What we have seen in the physical world applies to the minds and souls of men also. If the postulates of Vedanta are accepted, the Vedantic ethic is spiritual eugenics. The object of right living to a Vedantin is twofold; one's own true happiness and one's contribution to a better world irrespective of disconnection in memory when we are reborn. The appeal of Vedanta is based on a feeling of oneness with the world and responsibility for its future. Social and civic cooperation permanently benefits the town or village wherein one is a citizen; patriotism benefits the future generations of the country to which one belongs; Vedanta seeks the welfare of the future world of which we are the present builders. If we live detached and dedicated lives as Vedanta lays down, the world will be peopled by better men as time goes on. It is after all a comparatively selfish pleasure that would come of a memory of personality in re-birth. A soldier in the army does not

wish to know the names and particulars of the people who will benefit by his bravery and death. The Vedantin is a citizen of the world and a soldier in the world's army in a totally non-martial but no less heroic war agoinst evil, the more heroic since he seeks no personal reward.

There are forces in our nature that pull us down; we have soul force to help us to pull ourselves up. Let us pull ourselves up, overcoming the urges that pull us down. The Krishna *avataar* is the greatest of the incarnations of the Supreme Being narrated in the Hindu puraanas. In Sri Krishna the Supreme Being appears as Teacher for all mankind. The core of the teaching is detachment in all work and this is put in unmistakable words in the Bhagavad Gita. All the service which society and humanity in general need is equal in value and everyone should find out what he or she can do, and do it as taught by Sri Krishna.

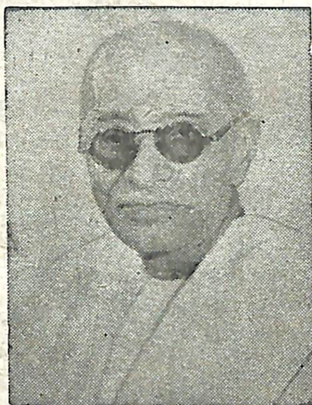
CONCLUSION

THIS EXPOSITION of Hinduism is intended for the lay reader, for the reader who either does not belong to India or who, though born in India, has not sufficient scholarship or time to go to the source-books and study them. In places it may seem as if we strayed into irrelevant hypothesis and mysticism. Even if we are interested in nothing but social welfare, we should remember that conscience must be rooted deeply in life itself so that it may shape our innermost thoughts and automatically produce right conduct. Right conduct cannot float in the air, but requires a conviction and faith to support it. It may in some cases seem so to be able to float—but it is really supported by tradition and family upbringing. It is really the momentum of the past that creates the illusion of spontaneous motion. We may delude ourselves into thinking that it can thus go on for ever unsupported by any creed or faith, but after the momentum is exhausted we shall find that without a fresh motive rooted in living faith, the obligation of right conduct peters out. A spiritual foundation is necessary for right conduct.

The call of ultimate reality heard in the recesses of noble hearts is by itself something which has led earnest seekers into the transcendental. Those who have drunk deep of the awe and beauty of the universe and to whom the lofty achievements of science have revealed extended horizons and as yet undiscovered realms of enchantment cannot

find satisfaction in shallow faiths and crude anthropomorphism. The mysticism involved in Vedanta relates the good life to truth and science. The conflict between religion and science is replaced and healed by harmony and integrated thought.

To go back to what we started with, religions that contradict the conclusions of science cannot but degenerate into formalism and hypocrisy. And if human happiness depends on doing away with indifference, and economic reorganization is to be based on the stable foundation of widespread moral faith and culture and if the compulsion of the State is to be supported by the willing cooperation of men and women, Vedanta has a contribution to make to enduring civilization. No polity based entirely on exploitation or force, even though administered by able and well-intentioned men, can last or be elevating even during the period it lasts. Vedanta offers a religious faith that can have no quarrel with the scientists who work in the laboratory or with the geologists who do research in the history of the physical world, and yet it offers a firm spiritual foundation for the just polity of a new world.



THE AUTHOR

CHAKRAVARTI RAJAGOPALACHARI, popularly known as "Rajaji" or "C.R.", is a great patriot, astute politician, incisive thinker and one of the greatest of living Indians. As a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, as an ardent freedom-fighter, as Chief Minister of Madras, as Governor of West Bengal, as Home Minister of India and as the first Indian Governor-General of India he has rendered yeoman service to India and left an indelible impress on our contemporary life.

While Rajaji's books on *Marcus Aurelius*, the *Vedanta*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads* are popular, he blazed a new trail in story-telling and delineating pathos and beauty by his best-sellers *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. The present book *Hinduism* is an expansion of the author's *Vedanta* and should be of special and even topical interest to scholars and statesmen of all countries. The troubles and difficulties of the present world can be overcome only by a more constructive examination and appreciation of the moral and philosophical background of the faiths and practices that have hitherto kept it in order and moving towards progress instead of self-destruction. The thesis of the book should put heart into those who are fighting the global battle for civilization governed by Moral Order.